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OFFICE SAFETY GUIDE

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FOR A SAFE FUTURE ...

Safety Now

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL - U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREWORD

The Department's policy is to provide safe, sanitary and healthful working conditions for all employees with supervision and equipment to enable them to work safely.

Each Administrator, Line Officer and Supervisor is expected to be thoroughly familiar with both his Agency's and the Department's Safety Policies and requirements. Every effort should be made to see that all employees are familiar with such requirements and that all employees work safely in doing the work assigned.

Each employee is expected to work safely in a manner that will not create a hazard to himself or others and/or damage to Government or private property.



Carl B. Barnes
Director of Personnel



Henry F. Shepherd
Department Safety Officer

September 1962

OFFICE SAFETY

16180

Any Safety Program to be successful must be continuous in function. Human nature is such that behavior is not always predictable. Machinery and equipment are not always perfect. Installations and adjustments of equipment, files, furniture, rugs, electrical outlets, fans, etc., are not always perfect.

Therefore, safety promotion and training must begin with preliminary planning of all operations and be carried on continuously through the entire program, but particularly when office shifts or changes are made, when new personnel is assigned, when awkward or potentially hazardous arrangements are discovered.

WHY OFFICE SAFETY IS IMPORTANT

Office work is commonly considered a non-hazardous occupation. This is only true, however, for the office worker who understands the injury exposures it involves, knows the safe work practices he should follow, and who works in an office where specific attention has been given to eliminating the physical conditions that may cause accidents.

ELIMINATING OFFICE ACCIDENTS

The majority of accidents are caused by a combination of an unsafe act with an unsafe condition. Corrective action obviously lies in eliminating both the unsafe act and the unsafe conditions.

Unsafe acts can be eliminated by making employees aware of the importance of accident prevention in the office and of following safe work practices. This can be accomplished by safety indoctrination of new employees, and by educating all office workers in the types of unsafe acts to avoid and the safe work practices to be followed.

Initial education along these lines needs to be supplemented by periodic reminders, such as: discussions with employees of unsafe acts versus safe practices; use of caution signs, safety posters, and pamphlets; and prompt correction of unsafe acts when observed by supervisors.

SLIPPING - TRIPPING - FALLING

Slips and/or falls are a major cause of lost time injuries. Prevention suggestions follow:

- . All floor areas, including storage space, should be well lighted
- . Floors should be kept clean, dry and free from obstructions of any kind
- . Linoleum and other polished floor surfaces should be treated with a slip resistant preparation
- . Rough or splintered floors should be treated with a suitable floor preparation or covered with a protective material. Torn, damaged or open floor surfaces including rugs should be removed or properly repaired
- . Building entrances surfaced with smooth flooring may become slippery during stormy weather, and should be provided with suitable non-skid strips or storm mats made of fluted rubber, untreated leather links, etc.
- . Employees should be prohibited from running in, or crowding corridors and stairways
- . Elevator cars should be loaded below their marked capacity
- . All stairways should be well lighted and equipped with anti-slip treads and suitable handrails, and should be kept clean and dry
- . Differences of floor elevation in aisles, corridors and other walk-ways should be clearly indicated, and where necessary, proper railings provided
- . Power and telephone outlets, wires, or extension cords should be prohibited in any location where they may create a tripping hazard nor should they be run over radiators, steampipes or through doorways and passages



- . Ladders or stands provided with non-slip treads and feet should be used to reach high files, or other high equipment. Chairs, boxes or other makeshift means should not be used. Rolling and trolley-type ladders should be equipped with proper braking attachments and their use limited to properly trained personnel.
- . The proper use of chairs is important. Tilting them back and elevating the feet should be discouraged. Weakened or hazardous chairs should be eliminated or repaired promptly
- . Drawers of desks and file cabinets should be open only while in use. Materials and wastebaskets should be placed away from aisles or passageways to prevent tripping
- . Rugs and carpets should be secured in such a manner as to prevent their slipping or creeping
- . Doors opening onto one or more steps should be marked with caution signs

HANDLING MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- . Employees who lift heavy materials should be trained in proper methods of lifting - lifting by leg power - knees bent - back straight. Mechanical devices should be provided for the handling of very heavy loads. The average office worker - especially women - should avoid lifting or attempting to move heavy objects
- . Windows should be readily accessible, equipped with suitable operating devices and move easily
- . The variety of office machines now in common use are generally operated by personnel unfamiliar with mechanical hazards. All belts, gears, pulleys and other rotating or reciprocating parts of office machines should be guarded as completely as possible. Electric machines and equipment should be properly grounded. Operators should be given thorough instruction in the use of mechanical equipment and precautions to take. All necessary repairs and technical adjustments should be made by trained mechanics or authorized maintenance personnel. Unauthorized persons should not be permitted to operate office equipment.
- . Electric switch pull chains should be the insulating link type.
- . Sharp burrs sometimes found on metal furniture, equipment, etc., should be removed before these items are used or when discovered

- . All washroom fixtures should be maintained in a safe and sanitary condition and in good repair
- . If it is necessary to use safety razor blades for various office cutting operations, proper holders should be provided and when not in use they should be stored in a safe manner
- . Broken glass should never be placed in wastepaper baskets. A special container should be provided for its disposal, otherwise, it should be adequately wrapped, carefully marked and safely placed for disposal by the cleaning force
- . Clips and staples should always be used as paper fasteners rather than pins
- . Wooden office furniture frequently becomes chipped or splintered creating conditions which may cause injury. Equipment in such condition should be taken out of use until properly repaired
- . Pointed objects such as pens, sharp pencils, spike files, etc., should be used with care and stored safely when not in use. The use of unguarded spike files should be prohibited since such pointed objects often cause serious puncture wounds
- . Paper cutters are extremely dangerous and should be guarded and used with extreme caution so the operator's fingers are protected from the descending cutting edge
- . Even so simple an activity as handling paper is not free from hazards. Cuts on fingers, hands, lips and tongue are frequently incurred by employees handling papers and envelopes. Paper should be picked up at its corners rather than at the sides. Gummed address strips and envelope seals should be moistened with devices made for that purpose rather than by the lips or tongue
- . Employees should avoid the possibility of dermatitis in handling solvents, duplicating inks, carbon paper, etc., by washing the hands frequently with mild soap and warm water and the use of protective creams and lotions as needed. Special preparations for harmless removal of hazardous materials from the skin should be used or protective covering used when possible
- . Safes or vaults should be closed by grasping the handles, with the fingers away from the door edge, to avoid mashing or bruising the fingers severely



- . Typewriter compartments should be opened and closed, only by means of the special attachments provided for that purpose. File cabinet and other drawers should be closed by using the handles since improper closure of office equipment frequently causes painful injuries

FALLING OBJECTS

- . Serious injuries have been caused by overturning or tipping of file cabinets. Faulty drawers should be repaired immediately. Jerking or pulling a balky drawer may cause a cabinet to overturn. Only one drawer should be open at a time. File drawers should not be overloaded. Heavy loading at top with light loading in bottom is extremely dangerous and should be prohibited. Standing in or on lower drawers should be strictly prohibited. Under some conditions, groups of cabinets should be securely fastened together or bolted to the floor and, when needed, weights should be placed under the bottom drawer of single cabinet installations.
- . The placing of card index files or other heavy objects on the tops of file cabinets or other high equipment can create a hazard and should be discouraged
- . Ceiling and wall fixtures, fans, etc., and their brackets should be carefully inspected immediately after installation and when repaired or replaced
- . Ceilings should be checked often for defects which may cause material to fall. Such defects should be remedied immediately
- . The pulleys, brackets, cords, etc., on venetian blinds and the operating mechanism of windows and other window coverings should be regularly inspected and kept in good repair
- . The placement of any objects on window ledges (unless built in) should be prohibited

COLLISION OR STRIKING AGAINST

- . Two-way traffic around blind corners can be safeguarded by signs and/or separated by lines painted on the floor, or if necessary by railings. Two-way and unobstructed access to all parts of the office should be maintained

- . Transparent, unlettered glass doors should have a clearly visible identifying mark in the center of the glass panel approximately 4½ feet above the floor. Solid, swinging doors should have clear glass observation panels or be prominently marked "IN" and "OUT" when used in pairs. Partially open doors are dangerous; doors should be kept either wide open or closed. Employees should be instructed: to look where they are walking - to stop to read correspondence - to observe caution leaving or entering doorways
- . All operators of hand trucks, in corridors or work space, should be properly instructed in their safe use and the protection of property and passing personnel
- . Electric fans should be installed at points where employees cannot come in contact with them. They must be securely anchored, properly guarded, and maintained in safe operating condition
- . Any protruding object or projection constitutes a potential hazard that should be eliminated, properly guarded, or clearly marked. A few items in this category are:
 - Pencil sharpeners or other equipment projecting beyond edges of tables or desks, on door frames, adjacent to passages, etc.
 - Drawers or doors left open when not in use
 - Desks, chairs or other office equipment which is splintered
 - Improperly placed or stored equipment or supplies

FIRE

Constant vigilance is necessary to control potential fire hazards in the office. A few suggestions for maintenance and inspection are indicated below:

- . Corridors, stairways and exits must be kept clear of stored materials and/or other obstructions
- . Loose paper should be placed only in wastepaper baskets and never allowed to accumulate on the floor or in or on equipment



- . Matches should always be kept in a safe unexposed place. Only safety matches should be used
- . The indiscriminate disposal of cigarettes, cigar butts, pipe ashes, and burnt matches in waste baskets, etc., should be prohibited. Ash trays should be provided where smoking is permitted
- . Wastepaper baskets should be of non-combustible material
- . Flammable liquids and other hazardous material should be stored in safe containers and preferably in locked cabinets. Only minimum quantities should be kept in the office and bulk storage should be in properly constructed fire proof vaults
- . Nitrate film (even single rolls) should never be stored in office space unless proper vaults or cabinets are provided for this purpose, and then only under conditions and in amounts permitted by Fire Underwriters
- . Oily rags should be placed only in closed, fireproof containers. They should never be stored with other flammable material
- . Open gas heaters, if required, should have metal connections to gas lines and be properly vented to insure safe disposition of products of combustion
- . Fire escapes and exits should be adequate for the number of persons using facilities and fire instruction and drills held at necessary intervals. Escape routes should be marked prominently
- . An adequate number of proper type fire extinguishers and hoses should be provided and personnel should be trained in their use. Easy access to them should be maintained and locations marked. Extinguishers should be tagged with annual inspection approval
- . All electrical equipment, connections, cords and wires should be inspected regularly. Any defects found should be repaired immediately by competent mechanics
- . Portable electric hot plates, if permitted, should be used on a fire proof base and all electric connections must be of adequate capacity and kept in safe condition
- . All employees should be instructed in the meaning of fire alarm signals and the details of emergency evacuation procedures

WORKING SPACE

- . Working space, office equipment and electric machines should be so arranged that maximum safe and comfortable working conditions

and maximum utilization of installed facilities (lighting, wall outlets, telephones, etc.,) is assured

Precautions should be taken to see floors are adequately supported to carry loads placed upon them. Special consideration is called for

when concentrated loads result from files, equipment, storage, safes, etc.



LIGHT, HEAT AND VENTILATION

Illumination at all points should be free from glare and ample for the type of work being done. Highly polished desk tops, such as glass may cause excessive glare unless covered by desk pads or other non-reflecting material. The following table shows the minimum standards of illumination currently recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society and approved by the American Standards Association

<u>Area</u>	<u>Min. Foot Candles*</u>
Cartography, Designing, Detailed Drafting or Drawing	200
Accounting, Auditing, Tabulating, Bookkeeping, Business Machine Operations, Reading Poor Reproductions, Rough Layout Drafting or Drawing	150
Regular Office Work, Reading Good Copy, Reading or Transcribing Handwriting in Hard Pencil or on Poor Paper, Active Filing, Index References, Mail Sorting	100
Reading High Contrast or Well Printed Material, Tasks and Areas Not Involving Critical or Prolonged Seeing such as Conference and Interview Areas, Inactive Files and Washrooms	30

<u>Area</u>	<u>Min.Foot Candles*</u>
Corridors, Elevators, Stairways, Locker Rooms	20
Storage Rooms, Inactive	5
Storage Rooms, Rough Bulky	10
Storage Rooms, Medium Activities	20
Storage Rooms, Fine Activities	50
Bookbinding, Folding assembly, Pasting, Cutting Punching, Sticking	70
Emergency Lighting	3
Embossing and Inspection	200 (Diffused)

*Minimum on task at any time; never less than 1/5 the level in adjacent areas.

- Adequate heat, properly controlled, should be provided. Steam pipes which are exposed where personnel might come in contact with them should be guarded or covered to prevent burns
- Adequate ventilation is of prime importance. Unnecessary drafts should be avoided and fresh air should be supplied in the amount of 15 cubic feet per minute per worker, or from three to four complete air changes per hour. If natural ventilation is used the minimum openable window space should not be less than 8% of the floor area served unless auxiliary mechanical ventilation is provided

MISCELLANEOUS

- Conduct - Horseplay of any kind, such as projecting paper clips, throwing anything in the building or out of windows, scuffling, practical jokes, etc., should be prohibited
- Education - The correction of unsafe practices requires the use of carefully planned educational programs for the office where it is to be used, and must have the sincere support of administrators and supervisors

- . First Aid and Health - Office furniture should be practical and functional, as comfortable as possible and permit workers to maintain correct posture
- . Conditions which impair the health of employees can have almost the same effect on production as an equivalent loss of time or reduction of efficiency through accidental injury. Good house-keeping and general cleanliness will help to solve this problem
- . First aid service should be provided for every office. If a special room or cooperation with other nearby Federal agencies is not practicable, the need for cots and first aid kits should be considered. Employees should be trained in first aid and designated for emergency service. The American Red Cross has standard courses for this purpose.



- . Hazardous materials such as carbon tetrachloride should not be used except when necessary in actual research experiments. Cleaning fluids, etc., should be stored in small quantity in well-ventilated areas and should be non-toxic, otherwise they should be used only when absolutely necessary and under prescribed procedures as approved by appropriate agency officials. Containers for hazardous materials should be air tight. "NO SMOKING" areas should be posted
- . Purchasing - Materials and equipment purchased should be safe to use and safety devices should be specified as part of original equipment
- . Inspections and Reports - Conditions existing in the vicinity of occupied areas, either in the same or adjacent buildings or areas should be evaluated as sources of danger to employees. These conditions may consist of fire or explosion hazards, unpleasant or noxious fumes, unsanitary conditions, etc. Every effort should be made to abate such conditions and if this is not feasible, other quarters should be sought whenever possible
- . Inspections should be made at regular intervals, accurate records kept to show progress and all accidents and injuries must be reported immediately in the manner and on the forms prescribed by your agency and the Department, as the basis for taking effective accident prevention action.

REPORT OF PHYSICAL HAZARDS IN OFFICES

DATE

This form was developed for use by persons in supervisory capacity for determining the physical conditions in their work area which inherently, or through application or use, present accident hazards to personnel.

PART I - IDENTIFICATION DATA

TO	
PREPARED BY (Print name)	DEPARTMENT
	BUREAU
	DIVISION
ROOM NO.	BRANCH
PHONE NO.	SECTION
LOCATION (Area covered by survey)	
BUILDING	ROOM NOS.

PART II - INSPECTION DATA

INSTRUCTIONS: Listed in Column A below are "Items and Conditions" that may in some instances endanger the physical well-being of employees. For each item or condition that is applicable to the working area, indicate whether or not a hazard exists by checking "Yes" (Column B) or "No" (Column C). For each existing hazard (Items and Conditions checked "Yes"), pertinent "Comments and Recommendations" for remedial action will be made in Column D. Items and conditions peculiar to the working area, that are not listed in Column A, should be added in the space provided in Section F.

LINE NO.	ITEMS AND CONDITIONS (A)	HAZARD EXISTS		LOCATION, COMMENTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS (D)
		YES (B)	NO (C)	
SECTION A - TRIPPING, SLIPPING AND FALLING				
1	FLOORS & STAIRWAYS:			
2	WATER, OIL, SOAP, ETC.			
3	HIGHLY POLISHED SURFACES			
4	TORN OR LOOSE COVERINGS			
5	ROUGH OR SPLINTERED SURFACES			
6	PROTRUDING NAILS, SCREWS, ETC.			
7	HANDRAILS			
8	ILLUMINATION			
9	TREASOS			
10	PROJECTING OUTLETS			
11	EXTENSION CORDS			
12	LOADERS			
13	WASTEBASKETS			
SECTION B - FALLING OBJECTS				
14	FILE CABINETS			
15	LOCKER SHELVES			
16	CEILING AND LIGHTING FIXTURES			
17	PLASTER			
18	STACKED MATERIALS			

PART II - INSPECTION DATA (Continued)

LINE NO.	ITEMS AND CONDITIONS	HAZARD EXISTS		LOCATION, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS
		YES (B)	NO (C)	
	(A)			(D)
SECTION C - COLLISIONS AND OBSTRUCTIONS				
19	aisle conditions			
20	valves and pipes			
21	pencil sharpeners			
22	desk and file cabinet drawers			
23	furniture and equipment			
SECTION D - EQUIPMENT				
24	office machines:			
25	guarding of moving parts			
26	wiring, switches or cords			
27	grounding			
28	furniture			
29	plumbing fixtures			
30	mail carts			
31	glass desk tops			
32	waste paper baskets			
33	edges of metal equipment			
34	electric fans			
35	insecurely placed equipment			
SECTION E - FIRE AND PANIC				
36	disposal of paper and waste			
37	storage facilities for flammables			
38	disposal facilities for smokers			
39	fire escapes and exits:			
40	adequacy			
41	aisles leading to			
42	access to			
43	signs and lights			
44	fire protective equipment:			
45	accessibility			
46	condition			
SECTION F - OTHER				
47	working space:			
48	sanitary conditions			
49	poisonous or obnoxious fumes			
50	arrangement of desks, tables, etc.			
51	aisle width			
52	housekeeping			
53	ventilation			
54	storage of poisonous substances			
55	steam pipes			
OTHER OBSERVATIONS:				
REPORTING SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE		DATE	REVIEWING OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE	DATE



Growth Through Agricultural Progress



